

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEL AV 07462 01 OF 02 301701Z
ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----115474 301726Z /47

O R 301628Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO USDEL SECRETARY IN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8502

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 7462

EXDIS

TREAT AS NODIS

PASS WHITE HOUSE

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS MILI PBOR IS US LE PLO
SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON CEASEFIRE

REF: USUN 3358

SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER BEGIN HAS REITERATED HIS CONCERN OVER THE MAINTENANCE OF THE CEASEFIRE IN SOUTH LEBANON AND ISRAEL'S NEED TO DEFEND ITSELF SHOULD THE CEASEFIRE BREAK DOWN. HE IS ANXIOUS FOR TALKS WITH THE LEBANESE TO BEGIN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. HE UNDERSTANDS THE NEED FOR A PRAGMATIC APPROACH BY THE GOI DELEGATION AND HE HAS ISSUED ORDERS TO TRY TO PRECLUDE ANY FURTHER REFERENCE TO THE TALKS IN THE ISRAELI MEDIA.

1. DURING MY MEETING TODAY WITH PRIME MINISTER BEGIN, HE AND DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN REVIEWED WITH ME THE CURRENT SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON. MFA DIRGEN EVRON AND DCM WERE ALSO PRESENT.

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2. BEGIN IMMEDIATELY RAISED THE ISSUE OF POST CEASEFIRE ARRANGEMENTS. HE WAS ESPECIALLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE FURTHER WITHDRAWAL OF PALESTINIAN TROOPS AND CITED SARKIS' "COMMITMENT" IN THIS REGARD. I REMINDED HIM THE COMMITMENT WAS ONLY TO MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ARRANGE ADDITIONAL AND FURTHER WITHDRAWALS,

BUT THERE WAS NO GUARANTEE THIS WOULD BE POSSIBLE.
AFTER SOME DISCUSSION ON THIS POINT HE AND WEIZMAN
INDICATED THEY UNDERSTOOD THE SITUATION.

3. BEGIN ASKED FOR A STATUS REPORT ON PROGRESS OF
ARRANGEMENTS FOR BILATERAL TALKS. I SAID THAT AS HE
WAS AWARE THE LEBANESE HAD PROPOSED A MEETING IN 10-15
DAYS, BUT THAT WE WERE PUSHING TO HOLD THE FIRST
MEETING AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. GIVEN THE FRAGILITY OF
THE CEASEFIRE AND THE GOI'S ANXIETY TO GET TALKS
STARTED, WE HAD THOUGHT THE SOONER THE BETTER. OUR
IMPRESSION NOW IS THE LEBANESE WILL ACCELERATE THEIR
TIMETABLE. I URGED BEGIN TO APPROACH THE TALKS IN AS
PRAGMATIC A FASHION AS POSSIBLE, GOING THROUGH THE
ARGUMENTS IN REFTEL. I SAID WE HAD ENCOURAGED THE
LEBANESE TO COME TO THE TALK SPREPARED TO ENGAGE IN
DISCUSSION OF A BROAD RANGE OF SUBJECTS INCLUDING
THE GOOD FENCE, FATE OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMANDERS,
ADDITIONAL WITHDRAWAL OF PALESTINIANS, ETC. BUT I
WARNED BEGIN THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD HAVE TO BE
PRUDENT IN THEIR APPROACH TO THESE SUBJECTS. THE
LEBANESE HAD ENOUGH PROBLEMS IN ENGAGING IN THE
TALKS IN THE FIRST INSTANCE AND A HEAVYHANDED APPROACH
WOULD NOT SOLVE ANYTHING, NOR WOULD IT BE FRUITFUL
TO PRESS FOR A FORMAL AGENDA.

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4. BEGIN WANTED TO KNOW IF THERE WAS ANY NEWS ON
WHEN THE LEBANESE ARMY WOULD MOVE SOUTH. I TOLD HIM
THE FIRST PROBLEM WAS TO AGREE TO THE PROCEDURES
RELATING TO THEIR PRESENCE. I ASSUMED THIS WOULD BE
ONE OF THE FIRST ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION IN THEIR TALKS
WITH THE LEBANESE. GOL ARMY UNITS WOULD BE MOVED INTO
THE AREA AS SOON AS THESE ARRANGEMENTS WERE AGREED TO,
WE HOPED WITHIN A FEW DAYS. WEIZMAN SAID THE
LEBANESE HAD NOW SUGGESTED MEETING AT EITHER MARJAYON
OR RAS NAHUN; HIS PREFERENCE WOULD PROBABLY BE FOR THE
LATTER. HE WAS MOVING TO RESPOND IMMEDIATELY.
BEGIN SAID HE WAS VERY WORRIED ABOUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN
IF THE CEASEFIRE DID NOT HOLD. ONCE AGAIN HE PUT US
ON NOTICE THAT WHILE ISRAEL HAD DEMONSTRATED GREAT
RESTRAINT DURING THE ROCKET ATTACKS IN THE FINAL HOURS
BEFORE THE CEASEFIRE, ANY NEW ATTACKS WOULD HAVE
TO BE ANSWERED. HE ASKED THAT WE PASS A MESSAGE TO
THE LEBANESE AND THE SYRIANS THAT THE CEASEFIRE MUST
BE SCRUPULOUSLY OBSERVED. I SAID WSHAD ALREADY MADE
THIS ABUNDANTLY CLEAR BUT I WOULD AGAIN CONVEY THIS
MESSAGE.

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ACTION NODS-00

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O 301628Z SEP 77
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TO USDEL SECRETARY IN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
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EXDIS

TREAT AS NODIS

PASS WHITE HOUSE

5. BEGIN THEN MADE A BRIEF REFERENCE TO THE QUESTION OF THE USE OF AMERICAN ARMS IN LEBANON. HE SAID IF THE CEASEFIRE DID NOT HOLD AND THE ISRAELIS WERE FORCED TO RESPOND, "WE MAY HAVE TO SEEK ARRANGEMENTS ON OUR SIDE TO ENSURE THAT NO AMERICAN ARMS ARE USED." WEIZMAN CHIMED IN THAT "IF ANYTHING BREAKS, WE WILL HAVE TO BE VERY, VERY FIRM. SHOOTING INTO LEBANON IS NOT ALWAYS BEING FIRM." I SAID WE HAD NOT THE SLIGHTEST MISUNDERSTANDING OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT OF SELF-DEFENSE IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES. I SAID I KNEW THAT THE SECRETARY HAD DISCUSSED THIS POINT WITH DAYAN IN NEW YORK. WE HAVE NEVER DENIED ISRAEL'S RIGHT UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW TO PROTECT ITSELF. BUT LOOKING TO THE FUTURE I SAID THAT IF ISRAEL WERE AGAIN ATTACKED AND TOOK ACTION IN RESPONSE, IT WOULD PROBABLY BE DISASTROUS FOR ITS FUTURE RELATIONS WITH LEBANON.

6. I THEN WENT INTO CONSIDERABLE DETAIL ON THE MOOD IN WASHINGTON AS NEWS OF INCREASING ISRAELI INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTH LEBANON REACHED THE STATE DEPARTMENT
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AND THE WHITE HOUSE. I POINTED OUT NOT ONLY HAD THIS INVOLVEMENT EXCEEDED ALL PARAMETERS WHICH HAD PREVIOUSLY EXISTED, BUT THAT ALSO IT HAD COME AS A COMPLETE SURPRISE, AT A DELICATE MOMENT IN THE PRE-GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS ON THE EVE OF DAYAN'S ARRIVAL. ADDITIONALLY, AS HE KNEW IT HAD PRESENTED US WITH A MOST DIFFICULT LEGAL SITUATION IN REGARD TO THE USE OF U S SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT. (I WENT OVER FOR HIM THE LEGAL PROBLEM.) FOR FIVE DAYS WE HAD RESISTED PRESSURES FROM THE PRESS (WHO HAD EYE WITNESS ACCOUNTS) TO COMMENT ON ISRAELI PRESENCE IN SOUTH LEBANON. WE HAD REFUSED ALL COMMENT, HOPING THE ISRAELIS WOULD WITHDRAW. IT WAS THIS DILEMMA WHICH HAD PRODUCED THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER.

7. BEGIN RESPONDED THAT THE LETTER HAD HURT. HE THEN READ PORTIONS OF HIS LETTER OF RESPONSE TO THE PRESIDENT IN WHICH HE PRESENTS THE CASE THAT ISRAELI ACTIONS WERE MORALLY AND LEGALLY JUSTIFIABLE (FYI EVRON EARLIER IN THE MORNING HAD GIVEN ME A COPY OF THE LETTER.) WE ARGUED AT SOME LENGTH OVER THE NEED FOR THE ISRAELI INCURSION, GIVEN THE FACT THAT AT THE TIME IT TOOK PLACE THE SITUATION WAS RELATIVELY STABLE. EVRON ENTERED THE DISCUSSION BY NOTING THAT THE INFORMATION ISRAELI EMBASSY DCM BAROM HAD PASSED TO HABIB HAD UNINTENTIONALLY BEEN MISLEADING FOR THE SIMPLE REASON THAT NO ONE IN THE EMBASSY HAD KNOWN WHAT WAS REALLY GOING ON. WHEN DAYAN ARRIVED AND REALIZED THIS, HE HAD IMMEDIATELY INSTRUCTED DINITZ TO SEEK ALL INFORMATION RELATING TO SOUTH LEBANESE OPERATIONS DIRECTLY FROM THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE.

8. BEGIN TERMINATED THIS PORTION OF OUR CONVERSATION
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BY OBSERVING THAT HE WANTED TO PUT THE EVENTS OF THE PAST FEW DAYS BEHIND US. THE IMPORTANT THING WAS: (1) TO MEET WITH THE LEBANESE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AND (2) TO MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY OF THE CEASEFIRE. I RESPONDED THAT EVERYONE AGREED TALKS MUST BEGIN SOON. BUT I SAID THERE WAS ONE FINAL POINT I WANTED TO MAKE; THIS RELATED TO THE PROBLEM OF PUBLICITY ABOUT THE TALKS. THE FACT THEY WERE ABOUT TO START HAD BEEN A MAJOR NEWS ITEM ON LAST NIGHT'S JERUSALEM TV, AND I HAD SEEN STORIES IN THIS MORNING'S NEWS-PAPERS TO THIS EFFECT WHICH HAD CITED SOURCES IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE. I SAID IT WAS IMPERATIVE THAT THE ISRAELIS SAY NOTHING MORE ABOUT THE TALKS. BEGIN

IMMEDIATELY AGREED AND INSTRUCTED WEIZMAN TO CRACK DOWN ON THE MOD CENSORS. WEIZMAN PROMPTLY LEFT THE ROOM TO DO THIS. I REITERATED THE NEED FOR A PRAGMATIC APPROACH BY THE ISRAELIS TO THE TALKS. I SAID THE LEBANESE DELEGATES WOULD BE MILITARY OFFICERS AND CERTAINLY WOULD NOT BE AWARE OF OR HAVE INSTRUCTIONS TO DISCUSS MANY OF THE POLITICAL ELEMENTS OF THE NEGOTIATION IN WHICH THE ISRAELIS WERE INTERESTED. I WARNED THAT THE TALKS WOULD FOUNDER IF THE ISRAELIS IMMEDIATELY INTRODUCED SUCH TOPICS AS CONTINUATION OF THE GOOD FENCE. I ALSO SAID I WAS CERTAIN THE GOL REPS WOULD NOT BE AWARE OF SARKIS' COMMITMENT TO ATTEMPT TO ARRANGE ADDITIONAL WITHDRAWAL OF THE PLO. THE ISRAELIS NEEDED TO BE VERY CAREFUL HOW THEY HANDLED THIS SUBJECT. BEGIN ASSURED ME THAT WEIZMAN WOULD GIVE PROPER INSTRUCTIONS TO HIS REPRESENTATIVES.

9. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE DISCUSSION BECAME INCREASINGLY STICKY, I PERSISTED IN GOING OVER MOST OF THE CATALOG OF RECENT ISRAELI SINS IN SOUTH LEBANON. BEGIN DIDN'T LOSE ANY BLOOD THAT I COULD SEE, BUT HE DID STEP BACK SLIGHTLY. AFTER THIS BOUT HE CANNOT BE IN THE SLIGHTEST DOUBT AS TO OUR POSITION
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AND TO THE IMPLICATIONS OF ANY FUTURE ISRAELI INCURSIONS IN FORCE INTO SOUTH LEBANON.

10. ACTION REQUESTED: SUGGEST THAT DEPARTMENT OR USDEL REPEAT SELECTED PORTIONS OF THIS MESSAGE TO BEIRUT AND DAMASCUS. LEWIS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Secure: OPEN
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TAGS: MOPS, MILI, PBOR, IS, US, LE, PLO, (BEGIN, MEHAHEM)
To: STATE SS MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/5ced1b3c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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